

Recurring, severe, prolonged cold weather will kill it down to the snow level and the occurrence of such cold without an adequate snow protection must be at least one of the important limitations to the distribution of this plant in places which would otherwise be suitable for it.

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### SHORTER NOTES

SHADE-INDUCED UPRIGHTNESS IN THE SEASIDE SPURGE.—For some years my attention has been drawn to the behavior of *Euphorbia polygonifolia* L. as it grows in abundance upon the sand along the New Jersey coast. When growing in the open, the plants lie flat upon the sand and form attractive patches, the closely-forked stems varying in color from a pale green in some individuals to that of a bright red in others.

However when the plants chance to be among any shore grass the aspect is so changed that one might pass them by as of another species. Instead of the thick-set, stout, many-jointed plant it assumes an upright position and the internodes are several inches in length. Such plants do not thrive in even the partial shade of the slender-leaved grass and probably rarely set seed.

By subjecting very young plants, started in the full sun, to the shade of twigs stuck into the sand near them the writer has been able to note the taking on of the upright habit. When the plants have already become prostrate the artificial shade brought to them will induce a turning upward of the tips of the stems.

Many kinds of prostrate plants exhibit this tendency to become erect in the shade, but none seem to be more sensitive than the spurge in question.

BYRON D. HALSTED

ANCIENT AND MODERN VIEWS REGARDING THE RELATION OF TAXONOMY TO OTHER PHASES OF BOTANICAL WORK.—In the April number of *TORREYA*, Dr. P. A. Rydberg in his article on "Phytogeography and its Relation to Taxonomy and Other Branches of Science" says a few words in defense of taxonomic

work, as follows: "Not long ago all botanical work done in this country was taxonomic work, usually known as systematic botany, although much had indeed little of 'systematic' in it. Now it is different. Courses in taxonomy are almost excluded from the curriculum of many of our colleges and universities or if not excluded so little esteemed that students are discouraged from entering upon them. *The taxonomist whether a systematic botanist in the true sense or a phytographer, is looked upon by phytogeographers, ecologists, physiologists, cytologists, and morphologists as of a lower grade of stuff;—as if it took a less fine grain of brain to make a first class systematist than any other kind of -ist.*"

It might be of interest to taxonomists as well as to those who are inclined to look upon physiology or morphology as representing the modern idea of what botany is or ought to be, while those whom they choose to call "mere taxonomists" are relegated to the same category as "stamp collectors," to compare recent views as expressed by Dr. Rydberg with those of one of the leading English mycologists who worked more than half a century ago.

In a paper read before the Quekett Microscopical Club on February 23, 1877, Dr. M. C. Cooke gave expression to his views in the following words: "In all branches of Natural History there are workers of two kinds: those who investigate the structure, physiology, origin, and development of a few forms, and endeavour to comprehend the whole mystery of their existence, and relationship to other manifestations of vital force, and those who devote themselves almost entirely to the study of various forms in any one or more groups, their relationship to each other, and their systematic and orderly arrangement, their affinities and their differences and their geographical distribution. *It is not uncommon to find those of the first group, the biologists, or physiologists, claiming a higher position for themselves than they accord to students of the other class, and even sneering at them as mere species-makers, or compilers of catalogues.* This is not only unjust but untrue; both are equally useful and equally essential and should not be made the subject of comparison. The work of the former is a great help to the latter whilst without classification there could be no science."

From the above quotations it will be seen that the ideas of those who are inclined to draw unjust comparisons between "mere taxonomy" and other phases of botanical work are not modern; neither are they restricted to this country but were current in England fifty years ago.

F. J. SEAVER

## REVIEWS

### **Pammel's Manual of Poisonous Plants\***

A Manual of Poisonous Plants is the title of a book recently published by L. H. Pammel, in which the author brings together into one volume most of the literature pertaining to plants injurious to man and to live stock.

The astonishing size of the book is explained on the first page of the foreword, thus: "I have placed the broadest interpretation on the subject and have, therefore, included all plants that are injurious, although many of these are not known to produce poisons, some even being most useful economic plants, and yet injurious to some people." Later on Pammel also says: "During the last decade, there has been much interest manifested in regard to plants injurious to live stock." I quote this as showing not only the trend of the author's thought, but to account, in part, for the great size of the volume.

The first chapter is headed "Poisons and Statistics on Poisons" and contains such sub-headings as "Ancient Use of Poisons," "The Rise of Chemistry and Poisons," "Ratzenburg on Poisonous Plants," "Statistics on Poisoning," "Statutes on Poisoning" and "Actions of Poisons on Different Animals." Under "Statistics of Poisoning" is given the number of persons dying by taking active poisons and by inhaling illuminating gas, and the poisonous cases reported among live stock in Montana during 1900. There are only seven pages in this chapter and the different subjects are treated so briefly that the information is necessarily very meagre.

\* Pammel, L. H. Manual of Poisonous Plants. Pp. 1-977. f. 1-458 + many unnumbered figures and plates. The Torch Press, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. 1911. \$7.00.